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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARAGRAPH RENUMBERED)

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2016
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [IV](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: RESIDENTS OF YOPOUGON ROUT PRO-GOV'T MILITIA

Classified By: DepPolEcon Chief EMassinga, Reasons 1.4 (b)

¶1. (SBU) On November 3, residents of the Azito neighborhood in the populous Yopougon suburb of Abidjan engaged in a daylong battle with members of a pro-government militia, the Groupe des Patriotes pour la Paix (GPP), and eventually succeeded in ejecting them entirely. Long-simmering tensions erupted into open conflict in which two residents were killed and two GPP members were reportedly burned to death after being wounded in the fighting. Twenty-five other GPP members were injured and taken to hospital with unspecified injuries. Local residents rallied after initial losses and routed the GPP from their local HQ, burning the facility. Specialized government anti-riot troops equipped with two armored vehicles, along with six mixed truckloads of soldiers and gendarmes, responded to the scene and prevented the GPP unit there from being entirely destroyed by the enraged residents. Security forces, led by Chief of Staff General Mangou himself on the scene, reportedly took 100 GPP members in custody, initially holding them at the Abidjan Police school for their own protection. On November 8 General Kassarate, Commandant of the Gendarmerie, announced in a press conference that 200 (vice the 100 reported in most initial press accounts) GPP elements were being held at the Abidjan Police and Gendarmerie Academies. Kassarate and public prosecutors said that no charges have yet been filed, and that investigations into the incident continue.

¶2. (SBU) According to press reports, the confrontation had been building up for some time. Created after the August 2002 coup attempt and subsequent division of the country, the GPP engaged in criminality to finance itself, robbing and extorting from businesses and individuals in the various communities it has been located. According to press reports, in Yopougon, GPP members are also widely accused of rape, adding greater resentment to residents apparently disgusted with their presence. The recent incident appears to have been sparked after the November 1 killing of a GPP member (possibly by a member of the military), which touched off a round of escalating reprisals.

¶3. (SBU) Public reaction to the events in Yopougon has been intensely negative against the GPP, which is seen as having gotten what it deserved. On the day following the incident, President Gbagbo ordered that all militias be disarmed, in all likelihood to appease public wrath. Since 2003, the government has formally banned the GPP twice. To date, however, we have seen no evidence of any moves to actually disarm or dismantle the GPP or any other militia. GPP leaders have been quoted disavowing any connection with the Yopougon GPP branch. President Gbagbo mentioned the Yopougon incident to the Ambassador and said that the 100 GPP members arrested would be prosecuted. Opposition groups are buoyed by the Yopougon incident. The PDCI has reportedly ordered its youth groups to eject the GPP from its strongholds, and,

in an 11/7 meeting with the Ambassador, the RHDP used the incident as an example of how fed up average people are with the FPI's provocations.

14. (C) Comment. This is not the first instance in which community residents have responded violently to the GPP's presence and criminal activities. In 2005 and later 2006, skirmishes between the GPP and residents around the Institut Marie Therese Houphouet-Boigny in the Abidjan suburb of Adjame, where the GPP had established a base of operations, were prominently reported in the press. The renewed opposition and enthusiastic support it has garnered from the population suggests a growing fatigue among Ivorians with the militias' thuggish tactics. The successful action to eject the GPP may also encourage opposition youth groups to react in force against intimidation tactics by Gbagbo supporters.
End Comment.
Hooks